

HIV/AIDS among African-American men in South Carolina

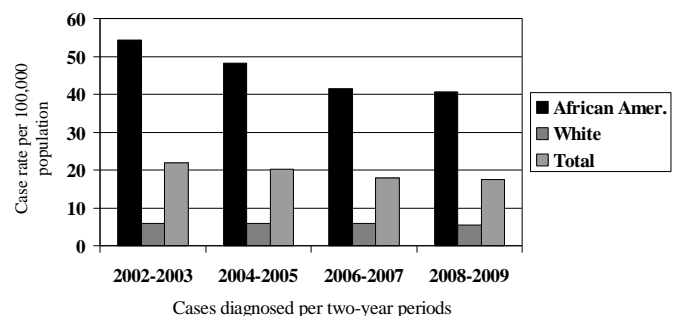
In the United States as well as in South Carolina, the HIV/AIDS epidemic disproportionately affects African-Americans compared with persons of other races and ethnicities.

In 2009, there were more than 14,700 persons reported to be living with HIV infection (including AIDS) in South Carolina. According to recent data, South Carolina ranked fourth in the country for the proportion of persons living with AIDS who are African-American (73 percent). The rate of persons living with HIV/AIDS per 100,000 is almost six times higher for black males than for white males.

New HIV Infections (including AIDS Cases)

- African-American men account for 15 percent of the state's population yet comprise 47 percent of the persons living with and 47 percent of persons recently diagnosed with HIV/AIDS in South Carolina.
- African-American men and women have been hardest hit by the epidemic. Seven of every ten men (70 percent) and close to eight of every ten women (79 percent) diagnosed are African-American (Figure 1).
- In 2008, African-American men comprised 53 percent of persons who died from AIDS in S.C.

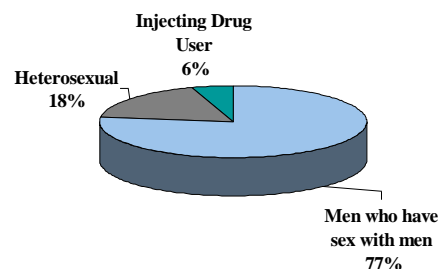
Figure 1: South Carolina new HIV/AIDS case rates per 100,000 population, by race



What puts African-American men at risk?

- Among African-American men recently diagnosed with reported risks, most cases (77 percent) were attributed to sexual contact among men who have sex with men (MSM). 18 percent of cases were related to heterosexual contact. About six percent of new cases reported injecting drug use as the risk (Figure 2).
- There are more than 6,900 African-American men living with HIV/AIDS in SC. More than 2,600 of these men reported sexual contact with other men as the primary risk factor. The majority of these men (48 percent) are between the ages of 30-44 years.

Figure 2: Proportion of African-American men in S.C. with HIV/AIDS by risk exposure, diagnosed 2008-2009 N=520



Total Excludes Cases with No Risk Identified; Risk Exposure is self-reported
 MSM- Men who have sex with men; IDU- Injecting drug user

Men who are African-American are at risk for HIV infection not because of their race, but because of the risk behaviors they may engage in. As with any risk population, HIV risk depends not on who you are, but on your specific sexual or substance using behaviors. HIV risk is also related to your access to health care, health education, and other prevention services. The majority of HIV/AIDS cases are among African-American men between the ages of 25-44 years.

What are obstacles to prevention?

Public health experts around the country recognize that African-Americans have experienced ongoing inequalities. These include societal benefits, health care, education and job opportunities. Unemployment, poverty, drug abuse and lack of health insurance are major co-factors that lead to higher rates of risk behaviors and HIV transmission. The impact is very significant in rural areas of the state. Our rural counties often have fewer prevention and health care providers, limited transportation for services, and fears of stigma and discrimination.

Men are encouraged to:

- Know their HIV status. It is important for their health and the health of those they love.
- Get tested for other STDs if they are having unprotected sex. Having certain STDs can increase their risk for contracting HIV.
- Change the way they view risk taking. Address their sexuality honestly and responsibly.
- Commit to talk openly with their sex partner.
- Use a condom correctly every time they have sex.
- Fight stigma. Men can help spread the word about HIV in our communities. They can talk openly with their families, friends, and church members. This helps create a non-judgmental and supportive environment.
- Take a greater role. Assume more responsibility in helping end the spread of HIV/AIDS.

What is DHEC doing about HIV?

DHEC is committed to working with African-American men and building the capacity of other agencies to:

- Reach uninfected people at risk. DHEC works to provide prevention programs through local health departments and community-based organization (CBO) partners.
- Link infected people to treatment, care and prevention services.
- Continue the support of the African-American MSM Workgroup. The Workgroup was established in 2006 to focus on strategies to increase HIV/AIDS prevention activities. It also works to reduce stigma, engage community leaders in the African-American community, and build capacity among CBOs.
- Engage community and faith based organization leaders to address issues causing health disparities.
- Provide consultation to communities of color through the STD/HIV Division's People of Color Initiatives.

DHEC Funded Programs

- Many Men, Many Voices (targets gay men of color and men who have sex with other men but do not identify themselves as gay or bisexual): addresses cultural, social and religious factors that influence the behavior of black MSM.
- Mpowerment (targets young adult MSM): includes prevention, safer sex, and risk-reduction messages in a community-building format.
- Healthy Relationships (targets HIV positive MSM): develops skills and self-efficacy of MSM living with HIV/AIDS.
- VOICES/VOCES (targets African-American heterosexual men and women): a video-based intervention designed to promote correct and consistent condom use to reduce the spread of HIV and other STDs.

For more information on DHEC STD/HIV Programs, the African-American MSM Workgroup or other activities throughout South Carolina, call:

S.C. AIDS/STD Hotline toll free at 1-800-322-AIDS